

Zambia, Africa

During the summer of 2011, Chris Moore set out to experience Zambia, Africa. Her daughter Madeline had volunteered for the Peace Corps and had been posted to a village in Luapula Province in Zambia. An invitation to visit offered Chris the perfect opportunity to experience Zambian culture first hand. And while in Zambia, a visit to a big game park seemed an imperative, as was a trip to Livingstone to see Victoria Falls, one of the Seven Wonders of the Natural World. To do this Chris gave a total of three weeks to her travels, spending one week with her daughter in the village, one week on a safari at South Luangwa National Park and one week in Livingstone. Chris explained that "each week was a different vacation experience". Met by her daughter in Lusaka, Chris traveled to her first destination, Kundamfumu, where her daughter is living while serving in the Peace Corps.

Vacation in the Village

During the first week, Chris immersed herself in the local lifestyle in the village of Kundamfumu, about an hour south of Mansa, Zambia. Here she was able to experience firsthand how her daughter lives on a daily basis, meet individuals her daughter works with in the village and experience how local people live in Kundamfumu, Zambia. Chris stayed with Madeline in her mud hut in the village. Zambian villagers live in huts made from mud bricks, without electricity or running water. Interestingly, a few members of the community have a TV or cassette player which they run off a car battery that they can charge using solar panels. Through Madeline, Chris managed to learn a few words in the native language, Bemba, the most wide spread language family in Zambia, so she could respond to all the villagers who stopped by to welcome her to Kundamfumu.

Kundamfumu villagers are subsistence farmers; they grow food for their own consumption. Their fields are located one to two miles outside the village. Farming is accomplished by manual labor, there are no tractors or beasts of burden; they practice slash and burn agriculture. The village has no significant cash economy. Villagers raise vegetables in small plots and when they can sell some of their crops or vegetables they use the cash earned to buy small amenities such as sugar, salt and matches. Their staple food is nshima, made from maize and cassava flour. They eat nshima at each meal, sometimes accompanied by cooked vegetables and occasionally chicken. Chris was lucky enough to experience a traditional meal cooked by a village family in their ensaka, or outdoor kitchen, over a brazier. While a different from any meal she had ever had before, Chris said she enjoyed both the tasty meal, as well as the family experience.

After a week in Kundamfumu, Chris and Madeline took the 12 hour journey back to Lusaka (a whole other story in itself) where they embarked on their next journey deep into the African bush, where wildlife viewing has its own lifestyle.

Vacation on Safari

For the second leg of their Zambian vacation, Chris and Madeline tapped into their wild sides; they set out to experience an African safari. They stayed at Flatdogs Camp just outside

South Luangwa National Park, one of the worlds' greatest wildlife wonders. Upon arrival at Flatdogs, Chris and Madeline were shown to their luxury tent (think lying on the bed with the Luangwa River in full view, hippos and all). Unlike camping in the US, this tent came complete with comfortable beds, electric lights, and a bathroom with running water. Both Chris and Madeline jumped at the opportunity to take a hot, solar powered shower. But the best surprise was finding elephants browsing on the trees in camp as they made their way to the restaurant for dinner. Flatdogs offers game viewing safaris each morning and evening. The camp is family friendly, with an excellent restaurant, a swimming pool, allowing guests to cool off during the day, and an internet café. Overall, the camp was a complete change from Kundamfumu village.

Chris and Madeline went on game drives each morning and evening, most in a game viewing vehicle, but they took walking safaris some mornings as well. They were pleased to have the same guide for each safari, and were impressed with how extremely knowledgeable their guide was about Zambian wildlife and the natural environment. Having the same guide all week meant that every safari was full of new experiences, new viewing locations, and new information. By the end of the trip Chris and Madeline had seen elephants, crocodiles, hippopotamuses, cape buffalo, hyenas, lions, leopards, giraffes, baboons, impala; every major animal that inhabits the African bush. The only animal that Chris mentioned they were unable to see was the rhinoceros, as it has been poached to extinction in the South Luangwa. Chris enthusiastically declared that "the safari was an amazing experience not only for the chances to see large African mammals, but also for how they were treated by Flatdogs camp staff. "They were very personable and remembered who you were, what you needed to see, and what you liked and disliked."

After their week on safari, Chris and Madeline traveled back to Lusaka to catch a bus to their last destination, Livingston, Zambia.

Vacation in Livingstone

During Chris's third week and final week in Zambia, Chris and Madeline traveled south to the city of Livingstone, where one of Africa's greatest wonders is located, Victoria Falls. Victoria Falls, one of the Seven Wonders of the Natural World, is situated on the Zambia-Zimbabwe boarder, where the Zambezi River falls into a mile long gorge, dropping 330 feet to the bottom. This natural wonder produces an overall spectacular experience, including pouring rainfall from the mist and a loud roaring sound. Livingstone focuses on tourism, and Chris and Madeline stayed at the Jolly Boys hostel in town. With their own room with a bathroom, they enjoyed meals prepared at the hostel café and evenings around the campfire meeting other travellers to Zambia. They described it as a thoroughly enjoyable accommodation, as different from Flatdogs, as Flatdogs was from Kundamfumu. Whipped from the first two weeks of vacation, Chris and Madeline found that they took this last week of vacation a little bit easier, with a more relaxing style. They traveled just outside of Livingstone to the falls where they spent the day taking pictures and experiencing the amazing waterfall. They also took the opportunity to have some good fun together, by spending a day on a zip line adventure. Both Chris and Madeline bravely took the zip line across the gorge, rappelled down the side of the gorge, and tried the gorge swing. One of their more interesting activities while in Livingstone,

was having high tea on Livingston Island, which is located on the edge of the waterfall. On what they thought would be a more relaxing adventure both Chris and Madeline let locals take their lives in their hands, as they walked to the edge of the falls and looked over the edge waterfall, with the only safety line being that of two guides holding their hands. This was a unique and exhilarating, if unexpected experience. After peering over the edge, they were indeed seated and served high tea; you can just imagine the conversation with the other guests at the table. To wrap up their vacation in Zambia, Chris and Madeline took a sunset cruise on the Zambezi River.

After spending the three African weeks together, Chris and Madeline traveled back to Lusaka, where they parted ways. Madeline went back to the village of Kundamfumu, to finish her stint with the Peace Corps, while Chris began her two day trek back to Fort Collins, Colorado.